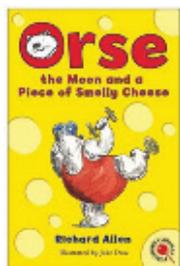


## Orse, the Moon and a Piece of Smelly Cheese



Written by Richard Allen Illustrated by Jake Daw  
Lollipop £5.99 ISBN: 978-1903774021

Orse, the polar bear, is kind, generous and full of good, and not so good, ideas. There are four lovely stories in this book, ranging from one about his 'not so good' ideas to a story where Orse takes part in a talent contest. Each one shows a different side of this delightful bear's character. The text is supported by beautiful illustrations. There is a guide to all the characters

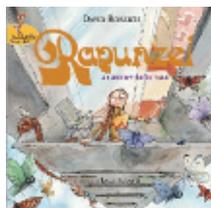
who regularly appear in the stories and a map of Orse's village, Snowville, including Runnynose Hill and Whoopsadaisy Glacier. It is a lovely, lively book about a memorable character - perfect for newly independent readers, although good for sharing too.

Patricia Thompson

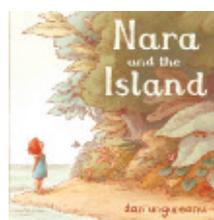
## Rapunzel

Written by Lynn Roberts Illustrated by David Roberts  
Pavilion £5.99 ISBN: 978-1843651826

An update of the traditional tale, this "groovy" story is set in 1970s. The basic plot remains the same - very pretty girl locked in a tower, guarded by a wicked witch, who gets in and out via a rope of the girl's very long and very strong hair. There is a handsome young man who finds his way in but is caught by the witch and ejected. In this version, for 'tower' read tower block, for 'witch' read wicked, lazy Aunt Edna and for 'handsome prince read a boy on a bike. Wonderfully colourful, bright and busy with very emotive illustrations and clear text. As in the traditional tale, the couple live happily ever after and the wicked aunt gets her just desserts. Complete with bell-bottomed trousers, platform shoes, lava lamps, cheese plants, and the walls covered with posters of popular bands and films of the 1970s, this book will appeal to the adults as much as the young readers. Brilliant. Look out for other titles in the same series with retellings of traditional tales set in different time zones - *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Little Red*.



Patricia Thompson



## Nara and the Island

Written and illustrated by Dan Ungureau  
Andersen £11.99 ISBN: 978-1783443420

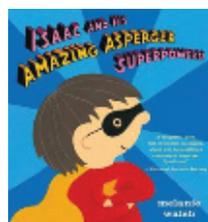
There is much to ponder upon in this beautifully produced book. The simple story and compelling illustrations invite close reading and examination, and at its finish the book raises questions that encourage a re-reading.

It's a strange story in which lonely, island-bound Nara dreams of extending her somewhat barren horizons by visiting the fertile island she glimpses from her secret hiding place. One day, when her father rows around it in search of the Big Fish, she is able to land on its shore and explore the lush vegetation and admire the exotic creatures. There she meets a young boy of her own age who has his own secret hideaway and also longs for company, and her pleasure deepens. In the hands of a creative practitioner this fable-like story with its layers of meaning and inconclusive ending could become a very worthwhile resource for discussion and imaginative writing.

Catriona Nicholson

## Isaac and his Amazing Asperger Superpowers!

Written and illustrated by Melanie Walsh  
Walker £6.99 ISBN: 978-1406344455



This picture book is both funny and moving. It offers a child-friendly explanation of the noticeable indications of having Asperger's syndrome. Here is a boy who looks just like other children, but is different because he has Asperger's. Isaac, very poignantly, explains how he is different by saying that he has super powers which make him special - he is a superhero. He has lots of energy, a brain full of

interesting facts and the tendency to be rude, even though it is not intentional. He does not understand how to relate to those around him, but gradually he will learn ways of trying to be sociable. It is a good, positive starting point to help young children to either explain or understand the condition. It is clear and simple, yet moving and thoughtful. At last - a book for which we have been waiting a long time.

Ingrid Fox

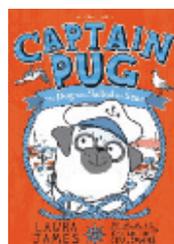
## Claude: Going For Gold

Written and illustrated by Alex T. Smith  
Hodder £8.99 ISBN 978-1444926484

Another great adventure for Claude, the red beret-wearing dog, and his best mate, Sir Bobbysock, the sock. This time, Claude has woken up desperate for something exciting to do. After trying his best to find an adventure, he bumps into a leotard-bound lady heading for the Stonking Big Sports Day, and she invites him to join in. So, swapping his beret for a sweatband and donning some rather large shorts, Claude has a go at the shot-put, running and swimming, all to no avail. He really isn't very good at any of the sports. Just as he is about to give up Claude spots some people stealing the sports day cup, so he gives chase, but will he reach the robbers before it is too late? This is a brilliantly entertaining read for both children and adults and the illustrations are wonderfully humorous and effective with just the use of red, black and white. Claude is the perfect character to get children reading for pleasure.



Nicole Jordan



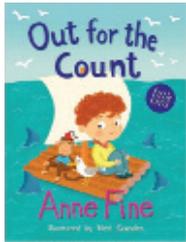
## Captain Pug

Written by Laura James Illustrated by Églantine Ceulemans  
Bloomsbury £5.99 ISBN: 978-1408866368

Pug belongs to Lady Miranda, who lives a privileged life. He is looked after by her housekeeper, Wendy, and the two Running Footmen, Will and Liam. One day she is going to attend a birthday party at the boating lake and decides that Pug, even though a dog, should become the captain of the ship.

However, things do not go to plan, Lady Miranda loses Pug and he ends up having a host of adventures on his own while Lady Miranda searches for him, trying to get him back. A simple, light-hearted story with the gentle humour that young children will enjoy. The illustrations capture the mad-cap humour of the story well. This is the first title in the series, with *Cowboy Pug* due in 2017.

Annie Everall



## Out for the Count

Written by Anne Fine Illustrated by Vicki Gausden  
Barrington Stokes £6.99 ISBN: 978-1781125076

Hugo and his father are decorating his bedroom when Hugo asks whether he can have a pet gerbil. His Father refuses, as he doesn't think it is fair for an animal to be in a cage all day. When Hugo argues that it would only be while he is at school, his Father

suggests that he tries staying in his room on his own for seven hours and if Hugo is happy at the end, then he will let him have a pet. So Hugo is left in his bare bedroom with newspaper on the floor, a drink, some food and three of his favourite toys. He enjoys playing, reading the newspaper on the floor, making up games and eating the biscuits. But, after a while, he is bored and is surprised to find that only half an hour has passed. The soft homely illustrations are spread throughout the book and add to the atmosphere of this amusing and gentle story. This is a celebration of the power of imagination and the delights of play with a dose of realism thrown in.

*Louise Stothard*

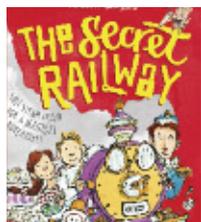
## Thorfin the Nicest Viking and the Rotten Scots

Written by David MacPhail Illustrated by Richard Morgan  
Floris £4.99 ISBN: 978-1782502296

Thorfin may be the world's worst Viking, but his story makes a delightful and entertaining read. When he is captured by the Scots, Thorfin's politeness and gentility eventually prove too much for them and they are only too pleased to let him go.

The story of Thorfin's capture, along with Viking girl, Velda, and the elderly and rather tired Oswald, is told with excellent pace and lots of humour. The contrast between Velda's daring escape plans and Thorfin's innocent pleasure in what he sees as a welcome holiday, makes for some laugh-out-loud moments. As Velda's plans are repeatedly foiled, Thorfin gently comes out on top, proving that kindness and patience can be more effective than violence and aggression. This title will be much enjoyed by newly confident readers, as it is presented with many amusing drawings, a clear large typeface, controlled but never dull vocabulary and short chapters. But it is the story, with its clear strong characters and amusing twists and turns, supported by lively and engaging illustrations, that will keep them reading and laughing to the end. Trading cards you can cut from the back cover are a fun addition.

*Liz Dubber*



## The Secret Railway

Written by Wendy Meddour Illustrated by Sam Usher  
OUP £5.99 ISBN: 978-0192745545

Brother and sister, Leo and Ella move to an old station house. Whilst their parents unpack they go off to explore. They find a dusty workshop which opens onto a station platform that should not exist.

Then, an enchanted train arrives to take them on a magical adventure to the Kingdom of Izzambard, where order needs to be restored. Escaping the evil Griselda's clockwork armies of butterflies and heronites is not easy, but Barty Button is there to help and advise how to use the Snarkifying Glass and Sleeping Key to reach the Great Grand Library of Snarks. There books abound in talking heaps, a flock of flamingos dance to the sound of a caterpillar choir and witches fly on broomsticks, just avoiding showers of umbrellas and lollipops. Peace and harmony re-established, home again in time for fish fingers. Large print, well-spaced, lots of lively illustrations and multiple short chapters make this fast-paced comedy adventure accessible to young readers. The intrepid duo return to the Kingdom of Izzambard to battle the evil Griselda once again in *The Secret Railway and the Crystal Caves*.

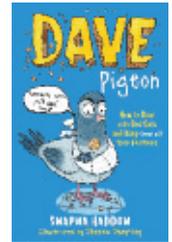
*Tina Massey*

## Dave Pigeon

Written by Swapna Haddow Illustrated by Sheena Dempsey  
Faber & Faber £5.99 ISBN: 978-0571323302

Winner of the Greenhouse Funny Prize, this debut book will absorb newly independent readers with its page-turning pace, quirky black and white illustrations, comic-style speech bubbles and unexpected page layouts. Basically, the story concerns the action-packed exploits of two city pigeons, eponymous Dave and his narrator friend, Skipper, whose running battle with the villain of the piece, Mean Cat, requires them not only to summon up daring plans that test the boundaries of pigeon ingenuity but also to accomplish superpigeon feats of bravery. Dialogue is studded with humour and word play, graphics are amusingly expressive and the gently combative relationship between the two pigeon friends as they jostle for control of each cunning plan to outwit Mean Cat will hold the attention of young readers. Strong on verbal and visual appeal this will lend itself well to being read aloud by an adult or for shared reading.

*Catrina Nicholson*



## Magic!

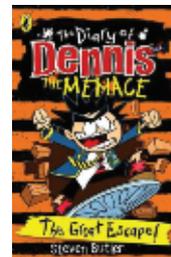
Edited by Siobhan Parkinson  
Illustrated by Olwyn Whelan  
Frances Lincoln £14.99  
ISBN: 978-1847805379

Subtitled *New Fairy Tales* by Irish Writers and edited by Ireland's first Laureate for Children's Literature, this is a compilation of seven magical stories by a mix of writers who either originate from Ireland or who are currently living in Ireland. Paula Leyden from Africa, who currently lives in Kilkenny, writes about Finbar the Furious, an ogre who is troubled by the expectations of him to be vile and furious when he is really kind and gentle. Darragh Martin tells of sky-snakes, whose heads are hard to see unless we have "a good pair of eyes, a brave heart and a little bit of luck". *Whispering Stones* by Maeve Friel is a beach story of undersea magnetism, magic and danger. Deidre Sullivan's *Prince of Darkness*, apparently, steals souls. And still more stories of royalty and the wee folk. These are quality, crisply-crafted, captivating tales of enchantment, magical happenings and larger-than-life characters, all captured, very cleverly, by Olwyn Whelan's beautiful art work.

*Gill Roberts*



## The Diary of Dennis the Menace: The Great Escape



Written by Steven Butler Illustrated by Steve May  
Puffin £5.99 ISBN: 978-0141355863

In *The Great Escape*, the sixth of Dennis' diaries, our hero has been sent to Posh Street School, an elite boarding school. Dennis is horrified as he knew he had failed the entry exam in spectacular style, so what has happened? Could he have been out-menaced by the Bash Street School teachers? Never one to sit back, especially when surrounded by books, swots and healthy food, Dennis enrolls the help of his Bash Street pals to help him escape. Fans will enjoy the familiar set up and the resultant adventure. The books are aimed at young menaces, looking like a school diary filled with ink blotches, notes and doodles - at times the font is so big and emphasised it feels like the book is shouting at the reader. The irreverent illustrations by Steve May are a large part of the fun showing Dennis and friends getting up to mischief and creating havoc. Young mischief-loving readers will thoroughly revel in this adventure, particularly if they enjoy toilet humour.

*Jane Hall*